

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Joseph Ah Hong Ah Ping

"Yeah, general merchandise. Working shoes, all kinds, shirt, pants, canned goods, sugar, rice, flour, all kind. Grass knife, you know, cane knife, all the hoe and that pick and shovel. All the kind people want, eh. General merchandise, mix up all kind. Country, eh. Sometimes we order nails, too. Sometimes people like paper roofing, we order paper roofing, you know, all that. Regular country store."

Joseph Ah Hong Ah Ping was born August 13, 1906 in Ka'anapali, Maui. He is the third of twelve children of Chinese immigrants Chun Ah Ping and Shee Yen Wong. Chun Ah Ping was a *luna* for Pioneer Mill Company. At the age of two, Ah Hong and his family moved to Kīpahulu, Maui, where Chun Ah Ping worked for Kīpahulu Sugar Plantation.

Around 1915, the family moved to Honolulu and lived in the Liliha area. Ah Hong attended St. Louis School, which was then located on River Street near downtown Honolulu. In the meantime, Chun Ah Ping moved the rest of the family to Moloka'i, where he opened Ah Ping Store, a general merchandise store, in 'Ualapu'e.

In 1924, Ah Hong had to quit school to help his father run the store, which also made and sold poi. Ah Ping Store was also the only store on the East End which had a gasoline pump.

After Chun Ah Ping's death, Ah Hong and his brothers ran the store until 1962, when they leased the building to other businesses. The building, across the road from the 'Ualapu'e Fishpond, now sits unused.

Ah Hong today lives in Honolulu, where he and his late wife, Eileen McCorriston Ah Ping, raised two children.

Tape No. 19-23-1-91

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Joseph Ah Hong Ah Ping (JA)

February 26, 1991

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Joseph Ah Hong Ah Ping on February 26, 1991 at his home in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Ah Ping, can you tell me, first, where you were born and when you were born?

JA: I was born in Kā'anapali, Maui, 1906.

WN: What's your birth date?

JA: August 13.

WN: So that makes you . . .

JA: Eighty-four, now.

WN: Eighty-four.

JA: Yeah. This year August 13th, I'll be eighty-five.

WN: So what was your father doing in Kā'anapali?

JA: Oh, he was working [in the] early days at Lahaina [sugar] plantation.

WN: Oh, Pioneer Mill [Company]?

JA: Yeah.

WN: Do you know what he was doing?

JA: He was some kind of a *luna*, like, you know. Then, the plantation was owned by H. Hackfeld, a German, the one that owned the Amfac building on Bishop Street. Remember the early days, it used to be adobe.

WN: So your father was a *luna* for Pioneer Mill.

JA: Yeah. Then after that—I think around 1908 or whatever it is—Hackfeld put my father go Kīpahulu Sugar Plantation where the flyer, Lindbergh, was buried, eh?

WN: Oh, Charles Lindbergh.

JA: Yeah, was buried. Stayed there.

WN: So that's where you spent your childhood?

JA: Yes. Stayed there till---a few weeks before the First World War [1917], Hackfeld sold it. Then we move Honolulu.

WN: So how old were you when you moved to Honolulu?

JA: Chee, was young days (chuckles).

WN: You were born 1906.

JA: Yeah.

WN: Before the First World War [began], which was about 1917 . . .

JA: Something like that. I think he sold the plantation to one *Haole* man. Was kid days, you know, he sold it. Then we move Honolulu.

WN: You remember growing up as a kid in Kīpahulu? What was that like?

JA: Oh, real country place. Sugarcane, you know.

WN: What was your house like?

JA: Old wooden building as a camp house.

WN: How many in your family?

JA: Well, we had about---I think around twelve. Chee, I wonder. Around twelve, I think. Some died during the early days.

WN: Big family, then.

JA: Yeah.

WN: So where was your father from, originally?

JA: Oh, from China.

WN: Your mother, too?

JA: Yeah, my mother. All from China.

WN: So what did you do to have good fun in Kīpahulu as a small kid?

JA: Well, we would play around there, you know. School yard, this and that. Ride those plantation horses and mules, go up the mountain, pick mountain apple. (Chuckles) Those were the early days. Was the good old days.

WN: Had plenty Chinese in Kīpahulu?

JA: Early days had quite a number. Quite a number.

WN: So mostly your friends were Chinese, or what?

JA: Chinese, some Hawaiians, you know. Koreans, some Filipinos. All mixed, yeah. We get along very good, early days. Everybody kindhearted, you know.

WN: So was there a mill over there?

JA: Yeah, sugar mill, yeah. And in those days, didn't have much truck. When they ship the sugarcane, all in the flume like, you know, water. From the mountain, the flume. They cut the cane, throw 'em inside, took 'em right down to the mill in the early days. Sometimes they have some old cart—mule—pulling. But some way up the mountain, ho, they get the flume. Water running. Throw the cane on. That's the old-fashioned way.

WN: You used to play by the flumes?

JA: Oh, we used to play with the shrimps, mountain shrimps, 'ōpae.

WN: Yeah?

JA: Come by the mill. Where the cane drop you see all the water below, where the water drip down, we go below, look, catch the shrimp (chuckles).

WN: Oh, so had shrimp inside the flume?

JA: Yeah, from the mountain they come down and some fall in the mill on the ground. They call that 'ōpae, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

JA: Mountain kind.

WN: How you used to eat 'ōpae?

JA: Oh, just boil 'em, you know. That's those days. Now, no more that, all gone those days.

(Chuckles)

WN: What about school? You went school in Kīpahulu?

JA: Yeah, Kīpahulu Plantation. The school was right by the church where Lindbergh was buried, you know. They had a school there. Had a big, old church there.

WN: So when you were a young kid then, you moved to Honolulu. How come you got to move Honolulu? Oh, because the plantation was sold?

JA: Sold, yeah.

WN: So what did your father do?

JA: Well, he came to Honolulu and then retired. He bought some homes up in town. They rented it out. Then after that, he bought a home. Then when we leave Honolulu, they sold it and moved to Moloka'i. Invested in Moloka'i---build a store up there.

WN: So where did you live in Honolulu?

JA: First we stayed at McGrew Lane, [off] School Street. Then afterward we moved to School [Street] between Nu'uānu [Avenue] and Liliha Street, in the middle there. That's where the bridge is, you know. They call that Waikahalulu Stream.

WN: Waikahalulu Stream?

JA: Yeah, School Street. So we stayed there till we moved to Moloka'i.

WN: And did you go school in Honolulu?

JA: Yeah, St. Louis School [a.k.a., St. Louis College]. All on River Street, early days. And from there, afterward, we [JA's family] moved to Moloka'i [in 1921].

WN: Yeah, in 1921?

JA: I supposed to graduate in 1927, but [in 1924] I had to leave school go home [to Moloka'i]. Help my father in the store, you see, those early days.

WN: So how did your father get the store on Moloka'i?

JA: Well, when my cousin died there, we took it over, that's how. Then we sold the home in town [Honolulu], then we build the store up there [Moloka'i], using the money invested over here.

WN: He owned the land, too?

JA: Yeah, he owned the land. That's all the family. Now it belong to my sister them. Yeah. They still there yet. You see the old building [sign], yeah, "Ah Ping Store." Right across the road

is the fish pond, 'Ualapu'e Fishpond. Then when we retire, Moloka'i Dairy Queen took over. They run six years, or something like that, then they shut down. So they gave up. But the building is still there. You can see, yeah?

WN: Yeah. Got the gas pump [still] in the front.

JA: Yeah. (Chuckles)

WN: So when you moved from Honolulu to Moloka'i, your folks moved in 1921 to . . .

JA: Somewhere around there.

WN: But did you stay back here to go school, St. Louis?

JA: Oh, yeah. [JA completed tenth grade at St. Louis.] We came Honolulu, then when I stayed in Moloka'i---after that I didn't attend school.

WN: You quit school?

JA: Yeah.

WN: So what kind of things you had to do in the store to help your father?

JA: Oh, I do regular general merchandise and the poi shop. There's a little building on the side, you know.

WN: Yeah.

JA: That's where the poi shop was. We used to get our taro from Hālawā Valley. Every week we grind. Sometimes ten bags, like that, twelve bags of [taro].

WN: How much was---how big was one bag?

JA: Early days no more this kind plastic bag. All, just like canvas, you know. One bag about hundred pound, you know.

WN: Hundred pound taro?

JA: Yeah, all taro. Hundred pound you scale 'em.

WN: Hundred pound bag of poi?

JA: No, taro.

WN: Oh, taro. Oh, okay.

JA: From Hālawā Valley we bring 'em to the store. Then we get a regular steamer, with *kiawe* wood. And we'd throw 'em in that big container, all redwood. And below is iron where we

put the water inside. And then the taro go on top, you know, steam 'em, boil 'em.

WN: But the container was made of wood?

JA: Yeah, out of redwood. And underneath is all iron, flat iron. And then the redwood container is waterproof where water no go out.

WN: Yeah. Oh.

JA: They boil 'em.

WN: Put cover on top? What kind cover?

JA: Bag. Use bag, cover on top. Hold the steam down. Then the engine on the side, five horsepower with a belt and a grinder on the side. Just like when you grind hamburger. Early days was the hand. You just got a belt and a round wheel. And the belt turn. Put your taro inside, press 'em down, press 'em down. Then on the floor we get a regular square container where the poi drop down inside. And there would be a table on the side, then we'd throw 'em on the table and mix with water and leave it there.

And those days we sell, you know, like dollar for twenty pounds. Now, just like that, you put two dollars in your hand for that plastic bag, yeah. Chee whiz, two dollars you no can feed the family! Hawaiian, the way they eat poi, they order a big bowl. Chee, we sell twenty pound for one dollar. Now they like ask little more two dollars in the [small] plastic bag. Oh.

WN: How you put the poi? You put 'em in bags or they bring their own pot?

JA: They get regular bag. Just like the flour bag, you know, put 'em inside, tied 'em.

WN: Oh, you folks did that?

JA: Yeah, yeah. We get 'em in a big, round, wooden barrel. Poi come, we throw 'em inside, and put a rag over it. People come buy poi, we get a bucket, wet the hand, and take. Throw 'em over there, put on the scale.

WN: Every day you made poi?

JA: No, once a week.

WN: Once a week.

JA: Yeah, we grind.

WN: And the poi last the whole week?

JA: Poi, just a few days, all gone. They buy enough for them till whole week. (Chuckles)

WN: So you grind one time. How many families, you think, it fed?

JA: Ho, sometimes we get about three barrels, sometimes four barrel poi, you know. Enough for people eat. Not everybody eat, you know, most is Hawaiians, like that. That's all. The rest of the people—Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, or what—they eat rice, yeah? (Chuckles)

Yeah, those days all gone. Now, no more taro Moloka'i. All the old folks pass away and no more taro. Waialua used to have taro patch. Now, gone.

WN: So the farmers in Hālawā and Waialua used to come with their taro and sell to your father?

JA: When they get the taro, we go down the valley and haul---get a truck. We get the truck to go down there every week.

WN: Oh, you folks used to go?

JA: Yeah, we go down there, we pick up the taro. They put 'em in the bag by the side of the road. We go with truck, put in the truck, and bring home.

WN: The farmers were mostly, what? Hawaiian or . . .

JA: Yeah, yeah, Hawaiian. Some little bit part Chinese. Yeah, they all gone. Soon as the old folks gone, little by little, no more, *pau*. Young blood no can. Take about twelve, thirteen [months] before taro ready for pull. What they gonna eat before that? Cannot live. They had to go work. Work on the [county] road or whatever there is. Pineapple like that, it's hard.

WN: You folks ground sweet potato, too? You made sweet potato poi, too, or anything else beside taro?

JA: No, some they go pick breadfruit. Hawaiians, they go home boil 'em and mix 'em with the poi. Some they mix with the poi so look like get more, you see. Even if they get ten pound poi, they get breadfruit, they boil 'em, they mix 'em with the poi. So maybe get about fifteen, sixteen pound extra, you see.

WN: Your father did that or just the . . .

JA: No, the Hawaiians, because they go different yard, they know get breadfruit already, yeah. They go pick. People give 'em, you know, help themselves. They go home they boil 'em and they mix with their poi so can stretch it, yeah, when they get a big family, you see.

WN: So you sold as much as they want? If a Hawaiian family wanted plenty for maybe luau [lū'au] or something, you sold to them?

JA: Oh, yeah. Sometimes they like half barrel or whatever it is. Up to them. But some they go and buy one bag [of taro]—bring home—then they get the square can. You know, the kerosene can, empty kind, they boil 'em themselves and then they pound for their party, like that.

WN: You folks had to take the skin off, too?

JA: Oh, yeah, yeah. After the taro is cooked, the skin kind of come off. Then bring 'em out and with your hand, scrape 'em all off. Then get a knife or bamboo stick and scrape whatever stick on the taro. Clean 'em good, eh. Then throw 'em in another tub. Then after that, cut 'em up into pieces so you can put that in the grinder, the jaw. The jaw is usually like that big.

WN: About what, eight inches?

JA: Few inches. Maybe about three inches wide and about five inches long. They put inside then you press it down and the inside grind. Then the poi go down.

WN: And you have a pot at the bottom.

JA: Yeah, we had a big tub where all the poi go inside.

WN: So you ground by hand or you folks used a machine?

JA: Get the belt and the grinder on the side. You know, turn. That's when you hear the thing all crush inside. Then the poi go more this side, go down in the tub. Press down like that, with the hand, press, press. Hard job, boy.

WN: And your brothers and sisters did that, too?

JA: Oh, once in a while when they get time they go help peel, peel the taro.

WN: What else you folks sold in the store? You folks sold rice?

JA: Yeah, general merchandise. Working shoes, all kinds, shirt, pants, canned goods, sugar, rice, flour, all kind. Grass knife, you know, cane knife, all that hoe and that pick and shovel. All the kind people want, eh. General merchandise, mix up all kind. Country, eh. Sometimes we order nails, too. Sometimes people like paper roofing, we order paper roofing, you know, all that. Regular country store.

WN: People paid cash?

JA: Those days, early days, was all charge. Some pay cash, some charge. Regular country store.

WN: You folks let anybody charge?

JA: Well, the people that stays there. Some of them they get their county pension. You see all that. And some work on the road [i.e., road repair work for Maui County], some work pineapple, like that. When they get their check, payday come, then they pay for their food. That's regular country style.

WN: What about the farmers? Did you folks pay the farmers cash?

JA: Oh, yeah. The farmers—they used to get their product like tomato, eggplant. They send 'em on the barge to Honolulu, to a private store. Come in a crate. They sent to Honolulu.

WN: What about the taro farmers?

JA: All in the island of Moloka'i, they don't ship Honolulu. Honolulu had taro, too, from Kaua'i.

WN: Yeah, so they sell [taro] to you folks.

JA: Yeah, just in Moloka'i. We had one poi shop in Kaunakakai, too.

WN: Oh, yeah.

JA: Yeah. And us on the East End, you see.

WN: You folks were the only store on the East End to grind . . .

JA: Earlier had about two other stores, small kind. Finally, all taper off, eh.

WN: What were the other stores in the area?

JA: Small, regular, you know.

WN: I mean, what---one was Aipa?

JA: No, they used to get potato in their yard. Next is Chock Pun. He's gone---the old man gone. Next is Chow Kwan. All gone.

WN: They had stores?

JA: Yeah, small kind store.

WN: Had Lin Kee, too?

JA: Yeah, the property there was for Lin Kee house. On the side, one Chinese *wen* rent one small space for store, Chow Kwon, yeah.

WN: I see.

JA: Lin Kee, Pūko'o. And next to that is the Buchanan Fishpond, by the corner. That's the best fish pond on Moloka'i, Buchanan Fishpond.

WN: Oh, Kūpeke? That's Kūpeke Pond?

JA: Yeah, Kūpeke Fishpond.

WN: Better than 'Ualapu'e?

JA: In the old days, yeah, cause get *limu* in that pond I heard the fish eat. Really fat.

WN: Oh yeah?

- JA: Ho, when you cut the stomach you can see the fat. It was the best fish pond. I don't know about today whether they take care or not, I don't know, you see. Was a good fish pond, that.
- WN: Who used to take care of the Buchanan Pond?
- JA: Well, themselves, because the family house on the side.
- WN: Oh.
- JA: And before days one Japanese he take care of that, Yoshimura. Right along side. He had one cottage over there. Yoshimura. The wife died. I think he's kind of old aged now. He staying someplace, I don't know where, in town [Honolulu]. I think he's old already. Yeah, that's the best fish pond, intact. That, and 'Ualapu'e, and Keawa Nui [Fishpond, owned by] Bishop Estate. Had big fish pond, you know, where outside the highway you can see white sand and some *kiawe* trees. Before you come Kamalō, yeah. That's a part of Bishop Estate.
- WN: That's Jones? That's not Jones . . .
- JA: Jones Pond was past our store, further up. Past 'Ualapu'e Fishpond, one mile and a half. Jones Pond.
- WN: Mm hmm. Yeah, yeah. That's by the . . .
- JA: The [Our Lady of Sorrows] Catholic Church there.
- WN: . . . the church, yeah.
- JA: Yeah, Jones Pond [a.k.a., Nī'aupala Fishpond].
- WN: Was that a good pond, too?
- JA: The pond was all right, you know, but Kūpeke was the good one.
- WN: Who took care of the Jones Pond?
- JA: I don't know who get 'em now. Somebody must have leased it. When you go up there you can find out, eh?
- WN: That's a nice pond, that one.
- JA: Yeah, right by the side of the road.
- WN: Yeah, yeah.
- JA: Yeah. I think the wife is living there. I think Mary Jones living out there. She's kind of old already. When you go up there you can find out, Mary Jones.

WN: So now, who took care of 'Ualapu'e?

JA: Oh, early days used to be---one old Japanese man used to take care. Kinoshita or something like that, I think.

WN: Sakanashi?

JA: Sakanashi. Yeah, Sakanashi used to take care the pond. Old man. But now I don't know who is living there.

WN: And then Harry Apo was . . .

JA: Apo, yeah, was over there. Now I don't know who. That's the only fish ponds I know is good, Kūpeke and Jones, come down, and 'Ualapu'e [and] Bishop Estate, Keawa Nui. The big one, eh, you know. From the road you could see. Nice island outside that one, white sand, and *kiawe* trees. Small boat can come in. Sampan, I guess. That pond, before used to be leased by a Chinese guy. Then I don't know after that. They had the shack by the pond.

WN: 'Ualapu'e had one shack, too?

JA: Oh, a little shack on the wall---all gone. Yeah, they no take care.

WN: Do you remember a [Edward] Duvauchelle taking care of 'Ualapu'e Fishpond?

JA: Maybe early days, yeah.

WN: Oh, maybe before your time.

JA: Yeah, before my time. All the old-timers. Yeah, the 'Ualapu'e Pond, before, you gotta be careful, too. There's *kākū*. Ho, you go inside there look, it hit your leg. Cut boy, you know, sharp. (Chuckles)

WN: They jump, too.

JA: Oh yeah. They call that *kākū*. And the mullet fat, too, good.

WN: You used to fish in there?

JA: Early days, we don't care.

WN: You used to go in there and fish?

JA: No, I just pass there. I see, I don't bother.

WN: You only go, what? Open ocean?

JA: Yeah. Open ocean go fish, sometimes you get squid. (Chuckles) Just for play.

WN: How often they used to harvest fish in 'Ualapu'e Fishpond?

JA: Chee, they harvest just when they feel like. (Chuckles) Yeah, that's all.

WN: But how often? Once a year or . . .

JA: No, sometimes they go maybe one month—one, two time when they want to eat fish, well, they would lay the net.

WN: Sakanashi?

JA: Yeah, that's all.

WN: And used to be mostly mullet?

JA: Mullet and *kakū*, some crab once in a while.

WN: *Awa*, too?

JA: Oh, a few. Yeah, get some.

WN: I heard had plenty clams, too, 'Ualapu'e?

JA: Usually get clams. But after sometimes fresh water come, all killed. Like Buchanan Pond used to get plenty clam. Jones Pond, too, used to get clam. But when big mountain rain come, fresh water go inside, all. . . .

WN: Back when you first moved to Moloka'i, do you remember mangroves in the 'Ualapu'e Fishpond?

JA: Oh, used to get mangrove on the side. You go down Kaunakakai, further up, one mile away from Kaunakakai town, you can see some mangrove. Yeah, those lousy trees, yeah? Chee, terrible that kind mangrove. I don't know who brought that back here in the island, early days.

WN: That's a pest, huh?

JA: Yeah.

WN: So you used to deliver from the store, too? People wanted somebody to deliver their groceries you used to go?

JA: Oh yeah. We deliver it for them. See, cause when they buy rice, they no buy ten pound, twenty pound. They buy all hundred-pound bag rice, you know, for the whole month. And feed for the hog; barley, scratch feed, and middling for the pigs or whatever it is, chicken like that. Used to get the feed from Fred Waldron Feed Store [in Honolulu]. Those feed barley come in eighty-five-pound bag.

WN: And you used to deliver that?

JA: Oh, they used to buy. Some they get car, they come pick up their own. If not, we deliver.

WN: Anybody not pay when they had to pay?

JA: Oh, when payday come, they get their check, they come pay.

WN: Everybody paid?

JA: Yeah.

WN: Who took care of the books in your store, you know, the bookkeeping?

JA: Oh, my brother. Early days used to be my dad, and then when he was getting aged, my other brother took care. Now, he's [brother] gone already.

WN: What about your mother? Did she work in the store?

JA: No, no. She don't want. Just us, you know, the children.

WN: And your house was right next to the store.

JA: Right next.

WN: So besides Fred Waldron in Honolulu, what other wholesalers you folks dealt with?

JA: Early days had plenty wholesalers. Theo. [H.] Davies used to be grocery, American Factors had grocery department. All that. Early days, salesmen, every month they come take order. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you used to go to the homes to take order?

JA: No, they come.

WN: They all come?

JA: Yeah. 'Cause all near to each other, you know, they come.

WN: What about people living like up Mapūlehu, like that? That's kind of far away, huh?

JA: No, but they come.

WN: So everybody had truck those days?

JA: Small truck. Some come on the horse.

WN: So when you quit school in 1925 [1924] to come Moloka'i, you wanted to do that?

JA: Oh, yeah. Family moved so we had to follow them.

WN: Were you happy or sad?

JA: Oh, I was happy those days. Was good. Good life (chuckles). Everybody happy.

WN: What about telephone? Did you folks have telephone?

JA: Old kind, with the hand.

WN: Crank?

JA: Yeah, crank. (Chuckles)

WN: Were you folks the only place to have phone?

JA: No, some of the houses get. Yeah, all those days gone; all the old folks gone.

WN: When did you folks start selling gasoline?

JA: Chee, early days. Before we used to sell gas, no more pump. Come by the barrel. I think fifty-three-gallon drum. So then we take about ten drum. Roll 'em down in the garage. Go on the platform, roll 'em on the platform, then get a pipe faucet.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: So the Kaauwai family lived around there? They took care of the pond, too?

JA: Well, they live right near. They pass there every day.

WN: So right now, if you can tell me some of the families besides Kaauwai who were living near you folks, near the pond?

JA: Chee, almost all gone.

WN: I mean, not now but, you know, way back.

JA: Chee, old Hawaiians like that, I don't know. I know the Iaea family . . .

WN: Iaea.

JA: You can contact them.

WN: And what about Puailihau?

JA: Puailihau, some of the brothers all gone. Some of the young generation, I don't know if they know or not.

WN: I talked to Rachel.

JA: Rachel kind of aged now. Yeah, Rachel.

WN: She's still on Moloka'i.

JA: Yeah. Rachel, nice lady.

WN: Yeah. And then [Edward] Kaupu was there?

JA: Yeah. Kaupu right by our store, further up, few hundred feet. But the children, I think, up there. I think one work in the hospital, I think.

WN: Well, let's see. Got Edwin over there.

JA: Edwin Kaupu used to work for the county. I think he retired. And one of the brothers was a minister.

WN: Yeah, yeah.

JA: Reverend [David] Kaupu, Kamehameha School.

WN: Yeah. Their father was minister [and a teacher], yeah?

JA: Old Man [Rev. Edward] Kaupu?

WN: Yeah.

JA: Yeah, their father. David Kaupu at Kamehameha School, I know him. He was little kid. (WN laughs.) I don't know he would turn out to be a minister. Chee, he used to come our store when small kid. Him and all these singers too. Let's see, she's well known.

WN: Oh, Melveen Leed?

JA: Yeah, she used to live one block away from our store.

WN: Oh yeah?

JA: That little girl come store. She, Kawai Cockett, and Dennis Kamakahi. All them small kids. All nice people.

WN: Oh yeah? Dennis Kamakahi and Melveen Leed.

JA: Yeah, Dennis Kamakahi.

WN: They're from 'Ualapu'e?

JA: East End. And Kawai Cockett, I think he work at Lē'ahi, I think, now. All the old-timers.

(Chuckles)

WN: So they were the little kids then?

JA: Yeah. (Chuckles)

WN: You folks sold candy over there?

JA: Candy, all kinds of candy. Ice cream, soda water, all that. Liquor.

WN: Liquor, too.

JA: Yeah, and general merchandise.

WN: What kind liquor? Store kind or the kind you make?

JA: Kind in the bottle. Beer, whiskey, sherry, wine, all kind. Quart or half gallon, gallon. (Chuckles)

WN: What about *crack seed*?

JA: *Crack seed*, too, was selling. They say '*ono*, the *crack seed*. (Chuckles) I said, "Honolulu get." The retail stores.

And they say, "No '*ono*, Honolulu kind."

They come they buy two pound, three pound, take Honolulu. Some of them buy about four pound to send to the states. I said, "Why? Honolulu get."

"Chee, we get from Honolulu. But funny, the taste is different." (Chuckles) Yeah, those days all gone.

WN: What about shave ice?

JA: Shave ice, once in a while we made. Big block—hundred pound—ice put in the ice box, cover with the kind bag so no melt fast. Scratch . . .

WN: Oh, the blade, with the blade.

JA: That's the old days, old style. Yeah, that's the good old days.

WN: Oh, we were talking about the gasoline, yeah. You used to sell 'em in the fifty-three-gallon tanks, yeah?

JA: That's the kind, we had on the platform. We get the five-gallon can. We put on the ground here, the barrel round, the faucet here . . .

WN: The nozzle.

JA: They fill up till five gallon. Put the funnel in the car. The early days. After we do it like that, then they get the pump.

WN: Oh. You know about when you folks got the pump?

JA: Chee, long time. That and kerosene oil, too. Fill up in the can. They bring their can—five-gallon can of kerosene—fill 'em up. The faucet open like that. That's the old style.

WN: Where you got the gasoline and the kerosene from?

JA: Oh, Standard Oil, Kaunakakai.

WN: Oh, Standard Oil? Kaunakakai?

JA: Yeah, they deliver.

WN: I see.

JA: Yeah, those days had a tough time. Early days, before, Standard Oil never bring Moloka'i. They used to ship on the barge or small freighter in barrels. Chee, you go down the wharf and you roll 'em on your truck. Ho, hard life boy. Old-fashioned, yeah. Finally, Standard Oil get a big tank down Kaunakakai. Well, they get their truck then every week they deliver 'em. That's how.

WN: So ever since you can remember, the wharf was at Kaunakakai?

JA: Yeah.

WN: You folks used Pūko'o or any of the other wharfs?

JA: We used to go Pūko'o get. The freighter park outside and put our freight on the [row]boat coming down to the wharf—Pūko'o Wharf. We drive our car right by the edge of the beach, you get the track. Push the track go outside about 150 feet or 200 feet. Then put 'em on top and pull 'em up again. Some get horse and pull 'em up. That's how. After that they do away with that 'cause not worth it.

Then, went to Kamalō. Up Kamalō, I don't know how many years we used to get freight. Pineapple barge, usually get pineapple from Moloka'i. Waialua and Pu'uoHoku Ranch used to plant pineapple. Pu'uoHoku Ranch was CPC [California Packing Corporation], Del Monte. And the barge used to come Kamalō Wharf. That's when they bring the freight over there, near to us, Kamalō Wharf. Then that went on for I don't know how many years. Finally, when the pineapple *pau*, they give up. Then they shut down that and we get our freight at Kaunakakai. 'Cause no pay for the barge come up just for [freight], you know, not worth it. Expensive 'cause pineapple was just fade out.

WN: They grew pineapple East End?

JA: Yeah. East End, one at Waialua, further up the hill. Used to be Honolulu Fruit Company.

And they used to plant one at Pūko'o, up the hill, too. Little bit, small area.

WN: Libby's?

JA: No, no. I think some kind of private. After that *pau*, give up. No pay. But Pu'uoHoku Ranch yeah, that was good early days. That went for I don't know how many years, then give up [pineapple]:

WN: What about sugar? You remember sugar plantation out there?

JA: At Kamalō I think. Used to be at Kamalō, sugar plantation. But all . . .

WN: You remember that or was it before your time?

JA: That plantation, early days, was I think owned by. . . . I don't know who, whether it was McCorriston or somebody, I don't know. Kamalō nearly all the old-timers gone.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: People used to meet at you folks' store to talk story and things like that?

JA: Oh, sometimes some politician come over, stop, see people there and talk. Early days. Yeah, all those old politicians all gone.

WN: Like who were some of the old politicians? You remember?

JA: Yeah, before was [D.T.] Flemming.

WN: Oh, Maui guys.

JA: Yeah, Maui. Long time ago. They used to come on a sampan, about three miles away from our store. Then get a car and come check on different county matters. Then they go back.

WN: Your father was Democrat or Republican?

JA: No, he didn't vote for president. He didn't care about it; he don't bother. As long they do good for everybody, that's the main thing.

WN: I guess you folks didn't sell fish, yeah, at your store? No need, yeah?

JA: No. Everybody go fishing anyway.

WN: People used to pay you with fish or anything like that?

JA: No.

WN: All was money?

JA: Sometime they get dry squid. They sell it. People want to buy. But most of them pay cash.

WN: So when they used to fish in the 'Ualapu'e Fishpond, what did they use? The big drag net?

JA: Yeah, the drag net. Sometimes they put the gill net, yeah. Go across, they hit the water. The fish scared and run, you catch in the net. That's how.

WN: Put the net by the *mākāhā*?

JA: *Mākāhā* or in the middle [of the pond], you know, long net. Make half of the pond. When you go to hit the water with the paddle, fish all going run. Some run, that hole [in the net] is about two inch and a half. Fish go in there and stuck. You see the tail go like that. (Chuckles) Some they put trap.

WN: Oh, what kind trap?

JA: They made their own trap; chicken-wire trap. One-inch mesh, round like that. Maybe about five feet long. And then come inside like that. When the fish go inside, stuck. That's how. When they swim around they no can come out.

WN: They used to put the trap where? In the *mākāhā*?

JA: No, some they put 'em in the pond. Some they get by the *mākāhā*, they make one trap over there.

WN: How you used to eat mullet?

JA: Well, some fry 'em, some make Chinese style—steam 'em.

WN: So the Hawaiians and the Chinese living in the area, what did they do mostly? County work?

JA: Most of Hawaiian was county work; work on the roads, like that. Chinese, very few work on the road. Most was Hawaiians, like that.

WN: What about the Japanese?

JA: Most farmers. They work in the pineapple [fields], well, they *luna*.

WN: Oh, I see. They worked for Pu'uoHoku [Ranch]?

JA: Yeah. They plant pineapple up Pu'uoHoku, all the Japanese farmers. They too good; hardworking people. Hard life, the early days. Most is by hand or mule. Now days, everything is equipment. (Chuckles)

WN: Japanese used to come to your store, too?

JA: Oh yeah. Everybody know each other. Yeah, I don't know how those old folks—100 years ago or what—I don't see how can they build those buildings. You look in town, all those big buildings. Fort [Street] and Beretania [Street], Nu'uauu [Avenue], all the big rock buildings. Chee, how can they lift the rock about five stories, six stories? Heavy! One rock like that about over 100 pounds or more. The early days no more that kind high lift. That's why I say, I give them credit, the old folks before.

WN: Oh, what about the Hawaiians who built the fish ponds, yeah? The rocks---how they did that, you know?

JA: Some say early days there used to be those Hawaiians—I don't know what they call those little, small people—Hawaiians.

WN: Oh, *menehune*?

JA: Yeah. They pass the rock. Yeah, that's how they build a pond the early days. That time we not born, I think, those days. (Chuckles)

WN: So when you came to Moloka'i in early 1920-something, you had---the ponds were already there already.

JA: Oh, yeah. All up already. We were born that time was up already. Yeah, I think Jones [Ni'aupala] Pond. Next to---another pond there owned by Hustace [KaopeaHina Fishpond].

WN: Yeah, yeah.

JA: The Hustaces bought the property. Now it's owned by Maria Hustace, that ran for [U.S. Senator].

WN: Yeah.

JA: Yeah, nice pond that, too. That pond all right.

WN: That's where? Where is that?

JA: Right next to Jones Pond.

WN: Next to Jones Pond?

JA: Next to Jones Pond is the Hustace house, you see, right on the edge of the water. Next is the pond, right there. Across the pond, that's where some Hawaiian live by the side of the pond. And then across the street used to be the old school ground, before, Kalua'aha School used to be. Then you go few hundred feet down you come to a bridge, yeah. You know that bridge?

WN: Yeah.

- JA: When you come up from that bridge going to Hālawā side—from the bridge—the first pond you going see is Hustace [KaopeaHina] Pond. I think maybe about 300 feet away from that bridge. That's Hustace Pond, Maria Hustace. Nice pond, that. Still intact yet, I think. Then come Jones Pond. After that, go further up come to Buchanan [Kūpeke] Pond.
- WN: There was a pond in Pūko'o, too, or was that the lagoon?
- JA: Oh yeah, across the road is that home that's owned by the Filipino Federation [of America].
- WN: Oh, Moncado?
- JA: Yeah.
- WN: Yeah, yeah.
- JA: Five-star General.
- WN: Hilario Moncado.
- JA: Yeah, right along the hill. Nice house, that. The pond is right there, Pūko'o Pond. But the Pūko'o Pond they made a cut, clover-like shape. Some rich guy bought 'em. They going build a home or something like that, I don't know. Now the pond is all wide open.
- WN: You heard any superstitious stories about the ['Ualapu'e] Pond?
- JA: I usually hear them talk, but I never take interest, yeah. (WN laughs.) Hawaiian style, I never take interest. Too bad all the folks gone, no?
- WN: Yeah, that's right.
- JA: If was twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago, some of them were still living, then all right, then you would know. All the old-timers gone. Too bad they cannot find any more up there. Maybe you might find some older guy, older menfolks. I don't know if their memory still good yet or not. Hard.
- WN: So you used to work seven days a week in the store?
- JA: Oh yeah. Anytime, nighttime they call you. At ten o'clock, twelve o'clock, need gasoline. They went up the valley, you know, Hālawā Valley. So they get there early in the morning, they go with the boat, go around. Go to Wailau. Those early days they call you. That's one thing, they follow about the tide. They know when a certain hour low tide, that's when they go. They go pick 'opihi. They go by the tide. If high tide, no can, danger.
- WN: So they come any time of night to get gas?
- JA: Oh yeah, some nighttime we give 'cause was all in front the store, the house right there. That's country style.

WN: They wake you folks up?

JA: Yeah, country style. 'Cause they know us, I know them.

WN: Yeah, yeah.

JA: (Chuckles) That's old-fashioned kind of way of doing business.

WN: Was that the only place they could get gas on the East End?

JA: Yeah.

WN: No other place sold gas?

JA: No, no more.

WN: Plus, too, had the ['Ualapu'e County] Hospital over there.

JA: 'Ualapu'e, yeah, right across. [Where] Kilohana School [is] now, hospital used to be there.

WN: You folks sold any supplies for the hospital?

JA: No, they get that direct. Yeah, up there quiet now since the folks all gone.

WN: Used to have plenty parties over there—luau [lū'au]—or anything like that?

JA: Well, once in a while. Old-fashioned, you know, Hawaiian. They all raise pigs, too. That's why when birthday come they get a pig to make the party. Some go pick *limu*, some go pick 'opihi for the party. All that. I don't know if today they still do that. I think kind of tough time today, though.

WN: Yeah. Your father spoke Hawaiian?

JA: Not really, understand little bit.

WN: What about you?

JA: I don't know much. I know some but not much.

WN: Mostly the Hawaiians spoke English, yeah?

JA: Yeah. The young blood.

WN: So you folks sold fresh vegetable, too?

JA: No. The farmers plant, some, their own garden behind the house. My mother used to plant lettuce. For home use.

- WN: So you had plenty brothers and sisters, you said. You were the one that did most of the work in the store?
- JA: Me and my other brothers, they all help along.
- WN: Because everybody remembers you the most, I think.
- JA: They were small kid, that's why they remember me. I used to joke with them, play with them. (Chuckles)
- WN: Oh yeah? When you were going St. Louis, what did you want to be?
- JA: I didn't think about what I want to be. Just thought of if you can finish school, all right. But I had to leave school when I was sophomore to help my father in the store, 'cause he cannot go haul freight thirteen miles from our store to Kaunakakai Wharf. Hard, eh? That's why I left school to go home help my father. Had to help family out. Some of them [siblings] were young yet, going school.
- WN: Oh, you were one of the oldest?
- JA: No, I get one older brother who's gone long ago. I have four brothers, yeah, three gone already. Just only me left.
- WN: How many sisters?
- JA: Oh, about—right now—living—about four, I think.
- WN: Four living.
- JA: Five brothers, I think. My sister died. Had some little ones all gone already, twins. I think close to twelve, I think. All gone.
- WN: Wow.
- JA: So just four sisters left.
- WN: You were number two?
- JA: No, brothers, I'm number three. Four sisters left and me, five are only living.
- WN: And one was a schoolteacher, yeah, you said.
- JA: Yeah, retired. She's in Moloka'i again.
- WN: So she went to school in Honolulu?
- JA: Yeah, she graduate from [Territorial] Normal School, early days.

WN: So you said your father had to travel thirteen miles for the freight. That's to pick up freight?

JA: Yeah.

WN: From the [Kaunakakai] Wharf and bring 'em back to the store?

JA: Yeah, get our truck, go down thirteen miles, come home thirteen miles. Yeah, hard those early days. (Chuckles) Sometimes they make two load, you know, 'cause we order sometime ten bag rice, that's a thousand pounds. And then you get about ten bag of barley for the pig or horse, and some scratch feed for the chickens like that. Ten bag each, I had to make two trips with that. And some boxes, too, canned goods all like that.

WN: How long took you to go from 'Ualapu'e to Kaunakakai?

JA: Oh, from 'Ualapu'e go to Kaunakakai take about, maybe about---I think around twenty minutes, twenty-five minutes go down. Come back it's slower 'cause heavy, the load.

WN: Was dirt road, yeah?

JA: Yeah, early days dirt road. Afterward they oil it.

WN: And had only room for one car on the road or two cars?

JA: Two, two cars can. Some place narrow. You stop they pass you. Some corners narrow.

WN: So ever since you remember was always the regular car? You didn't have horse and buggy kind?

JA: Oh, before when we go up there used to be buggy. The early days used to be buggy.

WN: Yeah, you used to drive that?

JA: No, that's my cousin's time before that. They get the regular kind old-style wagon, horse pulled. That was before 1900, I think. Those early days.

WN: And how often would you go Kaunakakai?

JA: We used to go down twice a week.

WN: Twice a week.

JA: Yeah, Wednesday and Friday, the barge come in.

WN: But sometimes two times a day you used to go?

JA: Yeah.

WN: Oh, I see. When the barge came down you guys went.

JA: Yeah.

WN: Now, your father, could he read?

JA: No.

WN: So how did he order?

JA: We used to get our groceries from Honolulu. Early days we used to buy from this Chinese store, old-timer, Ah Leong Store, King Street.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Plus, by the ['Ualapu'e County] Hospital didn't they have the county offices?

JA: Early days used to be the tax office there. It was run by Frank Foster. He was the head of the tax office there. Afterward [1935] they do away with that, then they move down Kaunakakai, the main town. And the courthouse used to be there, too. Same building with the tax office. Behind is the tax office, front is the courthouse. I don't know if the building is still there yet, or not.

WN: One building is still there.

JA: Yeah.

WN: They're using it for the [Kilohana] School.

JA: Oh, the school building.

WN: Oh, that's the [former] hospital, I think.

JA: Hospital used to be, now the school.

WN: So did you go fishing a lot?

JA: No, no more time. I didn't care. Only some nighttime, calm nights, no more wind. Walk on the pond.

WN: On the wall?

JA: On the wall you get the gas light or strong flashlight. You look on the side you can see the eel. Go like that get spear and spear it. (Chuckles)

WN: You used to eat the eel?

JA: No, just for play, small kind. Go home boil 'em, give the cat, eat.

WN: What about crab? Had crab, too?

JA: Crab, yeah. Ho, the kind eel long like that. Brown color, some white underneath the stomach. Nighttime calm, you can see the thing go like that.

WN: Swimming?

JA: Yeah.

WN: You had to ask permission from Sakanashi or Apo to go on the wall?

JA: No, they'll let you go for catch eel, like that. There's another pond further down, too. Nobody, abandoned. You know, you can go just around, go see. Nighttime we go always for fun. All those ponds get eel in it. Moloka'i, every pond.

WN: Along the wall, yeah?

JA: Yeah. Nighttime usually can see 'em. But some eel no good. Outside the ocean when you spear 'em, you miss 'em so they jump, brown color. Danger, that kind stuff.

WN: Had big kind barracuda in the pond?

JA: Had some not too big. Some pretty good-size barracuda.

WN: Do you remember freshwater springs in that pond?

JA: I don't know. Most pond, I think, they get some but you cannot see—all cover up. But when you go on the ocean, you walk on the side of the pond, some place no pond, you look, you can see that water coming up on the sand, flowing down from the mountain. You go on the beach you can see, sometimes, water is dripping. When you look at that, it's fresh water. You dig the sand, you can see the water coming out.

WN: Yeah?

JA: Right on the beaches. I guess, from the mountain, go down the gulches, then go underneath, come out in the ocean. You can see how that thing run. The rain, like that.

WN: Oh. Was the water over there more cold?

JA: Oh, you can feel it, yeah, fresh water.

WN: 'Ualapu'e had plenty *limu* inside?

JA: Yeah, had some *limu*. Yeah, get some.

WN: What kind *limu* had?

JA: Those Hawaiian *limu*. So they eat that. They call *limu 'ele'ele*, all that. If you see some old Hawaiian, maybe some Hawaiian younger generation, maybe they might know about *limu*. That's their food that, they know. They eat that.

WN: What you folks used to eat at home?

JA: Regular Chinese food. Like maybe Rachel Puailihau would know about that kind *limu*. Yeah, Hawaiians they all famous for eat *limu*, Hawaiians.

WN: So when did you folks closed the store?

JA: Chee, I cannot remember now. Only one would know is when they took over the store. One of the shareholders, Noah Pekelo. I think he work for that fish and game warden department, I think.

WN: He took over the store?

JA: Him and Shimizu and I think two or four of them, or something like that. You look in the phone book, Pekelo. Noah Pekelo, work for the board of agriculture.

WN: Oh, fish and game warden?

JA: Yeah, something like that. He would tell you what day he took over.

WN: So you told me, earlier, that your father retired in '62. That's when he quit—your father—in '62?

JA: Yeah.

WN: You didn't want to take over?

JA: No, I don't want.

WN: How come?

JA: 'Nough. Tired already, store life.

WN: Did your father sell it or . . .

JA: They leased it.

WN: Oh, leased it. I see.

WN: Okay. So in '62 you folks all came Honolulu?

JA: Yeah.

WN: The whole family?

JA: Yeah, except my sister [living] up there in the home.

WN: So what did you do when you came here?

- JA: My mother was living that time. You know, regular, fool around the yard, like that.
- WN: Did you work at all?
- JA: No, no, no. I was living on my---now I get my land so I don't worry. Get 'nough to live on.
- WN: Your land, where? In Moloka'i?
- JA: In Moloka'i, yeah.
- WN: And then for you---when did you get married?
- JA: Oh, chee. . . . Been married, I think little more [than] fifty years at least.
- WN: Nineteen forty?
- JA: Somewhere around there. I forget already what year it was.
- WN: Your wife was Moloka'i girl?
- JA: Yeah, Moloka'i girl. The brother was a judge in Moloka'i, [Edward] McCorriston. They call her Eileen McCorriston.
- WN: When did your father pass away?
- JA: Chee, I don't remember now. 'Cause I go Diamond Head [Memorial Park], I always see the tombstone.
- WN: I see. Okay. Do you go back Moloka'i at all?
- JA: No, since I retire from there I don't go back. Same old thing, nothing.
- WN: So from 1924 or 1925 when you came to Moloka'i to help your father to the time that you folks closed the store, you noticed any changes?
- JA: I think a few changes, maybe now get little bit more homes, now. Some are new people that moved there. Not too much changes anyway. People couldn't afford it, too, you know. All wage earners, outside no job, no can. Unless people with lots of money bought a place up there all right, they build. But outside of that, they no can depend on all local people, that hard.
- WN: What do you think Moloka'i is going be like in forty, fifty years?
- JA: Well, maybe it might come up. Some new guys buying place, develop, all right. But the West End, they sold big land---the ranch---to Japanese developers. Main thing is water, you know. No water, I no care how big the area is. You know the tunnel where the homestead get the water from the big reservoir by Kualapu'u? The water come from the tunnel. And that tunnel, if that went about maybe couple miles more behind Hālawa Valley, up the mountain behind

there, all right. If they stretch that tunnel further up, all right. Maybe they can get plenty water, you know, but if not, I don't think that they ever can build a very big resort. Main thing is the water, unless they get the money—few million dollars—for stretch the tunnel. Go further up, you know. Then they can get water. Right now, no 'nough for the homestead, too. They want to go in agriculture, this and that. And that resort going open. How can 'nough water? No can. So I don't know how it turn out. I hope it turn out good anyway.

WN: What about East End?

JA: East End, we all get well. 'Nough for home use.

WN: Get more rain than West End, yeah?

JA: Yeah, they get the pump stationed there by our place, about few hundred feet away, the county. Electricity pump the water up, you know, 'cause all groundwater. The water is just enough for the East End.

WN: So after Noah Pekelo, then your store became a Dairy Queen?

JA: They had the Dairy Queen before that, I guess, small.

WN: So now, your sister lives in the house?

JA: Yeah.

WN: What about the store building?

JA: Now it's vacant.

WN: You folks have any plans for that?

JA: I don't know. I don't know what they going do.

WN: You know, there's a group now that's trying to revitalize the ['Ualapu'e] Fishpond, and they want to stock it and raise fish commercially.

JA: Oh, yeah.

WN: What do you think about that?

JA: Chee, I don't know if big enough. Too small, I think. 'Cause if you want to stretch the pond more big, you might take somebody's land. Lots of *kuleanas* on the side of the pond. Unless they can buy those *kuleana*, all right. Because to go big commercial, too small yet, I think, pond. Yeah, when you go up there walk you look you can see the pond and the area. For big commercial [operation] too small, I think.

WN: I think they want to keep it small anyway, though. They just want family taking care of the pond. I don't think they want to go real big time.

JA: Well, big time no can. For family use, all right.

WN: Okay, you like Honolulu better or Moloka'i better?

JA: Well, if you get good health, you like live in the country, [Moloka'i is] all right. If your health is not good, it's no use. When you sick, doctor far away, no specialist. It's hard, you know. You go on a diet, you cannot have the proper food. You shorten your life. Country, mostly eat canned goods, you know, people. They don't go hunting. Goat, deer, or what, you no can go hunting every time. Most times in country they eat canned goods, corned beef, tomato sardine. All that eat all the time. Dried codfish, all kind. The doctor no recommend you eat that kind. You see, that's why you go visit all right, but live permanent—your health not good—no use. Better stay Honolulu.

WN: So you folks eat better over here [Honolulu] than over there?

JA: Oh yeah, here you get everything fresh every day what you want, all kind different variety. Don't eat the same old thing.

WN: Chee, you'd think country people would eat more fresh things. Fresh fish, fresh vegetable. . . .

JA: Sometimes good weather you can go out fishing little while or [go to] the mountains shoot goat, deer.

WN: But then a lot of them eat canned goods mostly.

JA: Country especially. Yeah, for visit, all right you go, like now days. For live permanent, little bit hard. No job, too. You raising young children like that—kids—when they ready by seventeen, eighteen, nineteen where their job? No can, hard.

WN: So you were born Kā'anapali, you move Kīpahulu, you went Honolulu, you went Moloka'i, Honolulu again. You enjoyed your life?

JA: Oh, yeah, so far all right. Yeah, good. Yeah, all those days are gone already.

WN: Okay, well, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

‘UALAPU‘E, MOLOKA‘I

*Oral Histories
from the East End*

Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa**

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